



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 5, Issue 1

October/November 2014

USDA Employees Beat Feds Feed Families Record

USDA employees met and exceeded Secretary Vilsack's call to "beat your previous best," in this year's Feds Feed Families (FFF) campaign. You answered the call and managed to donate nearly two million more pounds than last year. In all, this year's total came to 6.3 million pounds!

Based on statistics, 17.5 million households in the United States are affected by food insecurity. Those affected are often our neighbors, friends, family members, or even our Federal coworkers. Your efforts have made a significant impact on the lives of those who have the greatest needs. Since 2009, FFF has helped millions of Americans across the Nation, and from the beginning USDA has been a major contributor. We commend you for your compassion, commitment to USDA, and for your generous giving.

In addition to collecting food for families, USDA also accepted pet food donations as part of the 2014 FFF campaign. This decision was made in response to employees who expressed interest in donating pet food. Despite a late start in distributing information about the pet food collection effort, USDA employees donated more than 8,000 pounds of pet food during the campaign. The collected pet food was donated to animal rescue shelters and similar facilities across the country.

Karen Comfort of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) led this year's national campaign, and is pictured below speaking at the 2014 Feds Feed Families Closing Ceremony. Seated on stage are USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory Parham and Food and Nutrition Service Administrator Audrey Rowe. Standing behind Karen is Doug Keeler of AMS, last year's national campaign lead.



Agencies Team Up for FFF In Illinois

By Deborah Clairmont

USDA employees from all over the country participated in this year's Feds Feed Families (FFF) campaign. In Illinois, employees from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) got together with employees from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD) in the USDA Service Center in Normal, Illinois, and they collected 100 pounds of canned goods and staples for FFF. The donations were brought to a local group called **Worn Again, Too**, an organization that provides low cost/no cost clothing and food items to all people regardless of their availability to pay. They also provide free meals to the hungry and emergency relief in the event of disaster or displacement. So far this year, **Worn Again, Too** has provided 2,040 meals to the needy in the area. USDA employees are happy to help!



FEDS FEED FAMILIES BY THE NUMBERS COMPARED TO LAST YEAR

- 2013 Federal wide total pounds collected: 8,926,767
- 2014 Federal wide total pounds collected: 14,850,793
- 2013 USDA wide total pounds collected: 4,329,225
- 2014 USDA wide total pounds collected: 6,281,526

Category leaders:

Petite: Department of Education
 Small: Department of Housing and Urban Development
 Medium: Social Security Administration
 Large: Department of Agriculture
 X-Large: Department of Defense

2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results Now Available

By Karlease Kelly

The Office of Personnel Management has released the results of the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). This year, USDA, set a goal of 70% participation. Our final USDA-wide survey participation rate was 68.8%. This compares with last year's USDA-wide participation rate of 59.4%, and the 2014 government-wide average participation rate of 46.8%. To all of you who received the survey and responded, thank you for sharing your views.

You can view USDA's results at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/fevs-fcat.htm>.

By Debra Arnold

USDA Sounds the Smoke Alarm

USDA joined with the American Cancer Society on November 20, 2014 to promote the 'Great American Smokeout' by sounding the 'USDA Smoke Alarm!' Sounding the Smoke Alarm at USDA is an important step toward helping employees break a habit that leads to devastating health effects.

Many smokers joined the effort by putting down the tobacco on November 20th. Instead of picking up tobacco, they picked up a healthy snack, the phone to call a friend, or a child for a hug!

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the US, yet about 42 million Americans still smoke cigarettes — a bit under 1 in every 5 adults. Quitting tobacco is not easy, but it can be done. Whether you're a smoker, someone who uses smokeless tobacco, or just someone trying to help a friend or loved one, you'll find the information you need by visiting the American Cancer Society at [Stay Away From Tobacco](#).



For more information on this and other Work/Life and Wellness Programs, visit our Web site at [Work/Life and Wellness](#), or join our Community of Practice on USDA Connect at [Work/Life and Wellness](#).

USDA Promotes Work-Life Programs for National Work and Family Month

USDA observed National Work and Family Month back in October as part of its commitment to support workplace flexibilities and worklife programs. USDA leadership hosted the 3rd Annual National Work and Family Month Open House and Expo. It was exciting for some participants to join the event virtually through use of the Vidyo Portal provided by the IT Staff and TWD & Associates, Inc. (*pictured right*.)



All USDA agencies participated by volunteering their time, hosting a table, providing presentations or leading activities. More than 25 vendors and presenters participated in the event.

Private sector organizations such as Partnership for Public Service, Eldercare Locator, Bright Horizons Family Solutions and DC/MD Breastfeeding Coalition were also on hand to share some great resources and information in support of workplace flexibility and working families.

Guest speakers included Dr. Renette Dallas, minister, author, chef, fitness trainer, and lecturer, who hosted a healthy cooking demonstration and provided some great snacks; Andrea Wicks-Bowles from Bright Horizons Family Solutions, a Work/Life consultant and strategist who has assisted Fortune 500 Companies develop family care strategies for 25 years; and, our very own employee, Employee Assistance Program Representative Rebecka Mevorah, who discussed successful ways to help balance work and family. American Health Screening conducted health assessments, Rural Development's Anita Kapoor led yoga sessions, and Angella Greaves of the USDA Running and Walking Club led walking groups.

Special thanks go to Rural Development (RD) and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) for sharing information on how they supported Work/Life and Family Month; FSIS, Omaha, NE hosted a 'Lunch and Learn: Breast Cancer Awareness', and RD, Nashville, TN held a luncheon to discuss Breast Cancer Awareness, Hispanic Heritage, Cultural Transformation and Workplace Wellness. The luncheon was followed by some basic stretching exercises (*pictured above right*).



Photo by Martha Boyd

2014 Federal Benefits Open Season Ends Monday, December 8th

This year's Federal Benefits Open Season is running from now through **Monday, December 8, 2014**. During the annual Open Season, employees can take the actions listed below for the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB).

- Enroll in a flexible spending account –a health care and/or dependent care account, under the FSAFEDS Programs. Unlike with other programs, **employees MUST re-enroll** in FSAFEDS each year to participate. Enrollments DO NOT carry over year to year.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a dental plan under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a vision plan under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a health plan under the FEHB Program.
- Waive participation in or Elect Premium Conversion (Pre-taxation) of FEHB Premiums.

Visit OPM's website at www.opm.gov/insure to learn more about these Programs. When the 2014 premiums rates for FEHB and FEDVIP become available, they will be posted at: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/rates/index.asp>. OPM has also created an [Open Season Checklist](#) for employees to consider prior to the start of Open Season.

USDA at National Image Conference

USDA had a strong presence at the recent National Image Conference in Baltimore, MD. National Image is an organization devoted to promoting Hispanic employment in the Federal government.

Once again this year, National Image partnered with Federal Employees with Disabilities and FEDQ, an organization created to promote lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender employment in the Federal government, to train hundreds of participants.

More than 30 USDA employees attended and took part in a USDA Agency Forum. Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator Anne Alonzo delivered the keynote address at the "Women in Action Committee Awards" and Dr. Zina Sutch, Director of USDA's Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division, presented on Diversity and Inclusion during the National Training Program's general plenary session.



USDA Employee Recognized as "Mother of the Year"

By Karlease Kelly Louise Battle, Ethics Specialist with the USDA Office of Ethics, was recently recognized by American Mothers, Inc. as the 2014 Mother of the Year for the D.C. Metro Area.

The American Mothers, Inc., a non-profit organization committed to valuing mothers through service and education, recognizes the important role of motherhood. As the official sponsor of Mother's Day and Mother of the Year, American Mothers, Inc. is dedicated to reducing the rates of violence and improving the lives of mothers and families around the world.

Along with being named 2014 Mother of the Year for the D.C. Metro Area, Ms. Battle was also recognized for her outstanding community volunteer service. She was honored recently at the American Mothers, Incorporated annual national convention.

2014 Secretary's Honor Awards Winners Announced

Winners have been announced for the 66th Annual Secretary's Honors Awards. These prestigious awards presented by Secretary Vilsack, recognize noteworthy accomplishments that significantly contribute to the advancement of USDA's Strategic goals, mission objectives, and overall management excellence.

At the Honors Awards ceremony held earlier this month, the Agricultural Marketing Service's StrikeForce Project led the way, receiving a Secretary's Honor Award for Enhancing the Economic Vitality and Quality of Life in Rural America.

The StrikeForce Project was created in 2010 to grow economies, increase investments, and create opportunities in poverty-stricken rural communities. There are now over [700 persistent poverty counties](#), parishes, boroughs, Colonias and tribal reservations in twenty states receiving StrikeForce attention.

Since its inception, StrikeForce has formed over 400 community based partnerships and supported 80,300 projects to strengthen America's rural economy.

Other notable winners included:

- Eric Forsman, U.S. Forest Service, Secretary's Honor Award for Protecting Natural Resources category;
- Afghanistan Agricultural Extension Project, NIFA, Award for Increasing Global Food Security;
- Charles Newhouse, Farm Service Agency, Award for Heroism and Emergency Response category; and
- 2013 Summer Food Service Program Expansion Team, Food and Nutrition Service, Award for Ensuring Access to Safe and Nutritious Food.

Look for the complete list of the 2014 Secretary's Honor Awards Winners in the next issue of *MyUSDA*.

USDA Signs MOU With Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network

Fresh off the heels of an historic contribution from USDA employees to the Feds Feed Families food drive, USDA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network (MAGNET).

It is part of an ongoing initiative to support the reduction (and elimination) of hunger in the United States.

Gleaning is the act of harvesting fresh produce from fields, orchards, and packing facilities that would otherwise be wasted. The food is then distributed to people in need.

The produce is donated by farmers and harvested by volunteers, and then distributed to those who are suffering from food insecurity through providers such as food banks, shelters, and soup kitchens.

The MOU supports advisories and directives that allow employees to have reasonable administrative leave to engage in volunteer activities.

The agreement is not a funding arrangement but a framework to allow USDA employees to volunteer their time to this important work. Stay tuned for more information about how you can help!

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

USDA Running and Walking Club Takes on the US Marine Corps

By Greg Rosenthal

Members of the new USDA Running and Walking Club (RWC) could barely wait to prove their passion for running. In September 2014, their club became an official USDA Welfare and Recreation Organization. The very next month, on October 26, seven members ran the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM), enduring the grueling but beautiful 26.2-mile course through D.C. and Northern Virginia. Along the route, coworkers urged them on from the USDA Cheering Section, a tradition Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) Under Secretary Ed Avalos helped establish last year. This year the section was co-hosted by Under Secretary Avalos, MRP Deputy Under Secretary Elvis Cordova, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights' Cyrus Salazar, and RWC.

The club connects USDA-ers to promote, practice, and enjoy the benefits of running and walking for health, recreation and competition. Members enjoy the experience in many ways. "Running marathons helps to keep me running the other 364 days out of the year and to keep up that quality time with myself," said Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Deputy Administrator Craig Morris.

"Between marathons," said Dora Flores, AMS Dairy Marketing Specialist and Hispanic Employment Program Manager, "I do my four-mile maintenance runs at lunchtime. When I return, I feel like I can work eight more hours." Effie Baldwin, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Management Resource Officer, said, "For me it definitely keeps the calories balanced and clears the mind."

Bobby Tran, Office of the Chief Information Officer's Service Desk Manager, noted how running clears his mind "or triggers ideas during some long runs." As for Annie Ceccarini, AMS Program Coordinator, it's all about good times with her dog. "Cobalt is my workout buddy and pacesetter for 10- and 14-mile runs," she said. "Going for a run has become more fun with him by my side."

Other RWC marathoners included Ronald Banegas (Food Safety and Inspection Service) and Shethir Riva (AMS). USDA employees who are eager to lace up and run or walk with their colleagues should visit RWC's USDA Connect page at <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/usdarunningandwalkingclub>.



Cobalt, a coonhound/Weimaraner mix, rewards Agricultural Marketing Services employee Annie Ceccarini with wet, sloppy kisses after she completes the marathon.



OCIO's Bobby Tran proudly displays his Marine Corps Marathon medal.



National Institute of Food and Agriculture employee Effie Baldwin (center) celebrates with her sons, U.S. Marine Corps Lance Corporal Tiler Baldwin (left) and Corporal Tirone Baldwin, at the finish line—mission accomplished!

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to:

MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for December submissions is Monday, December 8, 2014.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality. **The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.